

Just a Hundred Thousand Dollars

BY BRUCE BARTON

Was It a Tale of Money or Love or Both?

VERY DOUGLAS father and mother and their four children came down to Vermont where the soil was so stony that they had to cut the potatoes into thin slices and stick them into the ground sideways. Take a Scotch family and add ten years on a Vermont farm, and you have folks that will neither give up what they go after nor much of what they've once got. Avery Douglas was given one penny, which he clutched in his chubby hand and dropped into the collection plate at the latest possible moment. Except for this, he never saw any money at all.

His father died of pneumonia, and Avery set to work to help his mother keep the family together; and by her washing and cooking for parties in the big houses at the other end of town and his mowing lawns and sweeping out offices, and what not, they managed to make a good job of it. But being the son of such a father, and having to fight so hard to eat regularly, Avery never developed what you would call a generous disposition.

We never had a nicer dozen boys and girls in the high school than were in Avery's class. The most talented of the lot was Tom Breckenridge, and Elizabeth Armstrong was the prettiest girl by far. Tom was about as different from Avery as ice cream is from ham and eggs. He was a full two inches taller, with big, handsome features and a mouth that was always laughing at a joke or just getting ready to spring one. His grandfather had owned a farm that happened to be where Boston wanted to move to, and no member of the family had done any real work since.

Tom was captain of the foot ball team, a prize debater, and valiant defender of the class. Folks said he had got everything in school he wanted except Elizabeth Armstrong, and that he would have her before his college days were over. I can remember now how they looked on the platform—Tom with his new suit from Boston and Elizabeth in her white dress with the big sash around her waist, and poor old Avery in a coat and pants that must have been two years old at least. I felt sorry for him; but he needed no one's sympathy. He squirmed away at the crowd, stuck his chin into the air and shot his speech straight at us. It wasn't as polished as Tom's, but it hit, and hit hard.

Well, they went off to college. Tom to Yale, and Avery to Boston University, where he could read a little law on the side at such hours as he wasn't tending to some one's furnace or clerking in a shoe store. Everybody gave parties in the summer and Tom took Elizabeth everywhere and we all expected to read some news from that quarter in almost any issue of the Enterprise, but the summer passed and nothing happened.

Then Tom took his way to New York and Avery was already digging into his law studies, and living in some little back room in Boston where the landlady didn't object to cooking over the gas flame or drying shirts over same. So more years passed, and then the spring Betty flashed into our midst wearing a brand-new diamond ring; and when we asked her whether Tom got it at Tiffany's, she said no, that Avery bought it in Boston.

Whereupon we looked at it again, and saw that it wasn't such a very big diamond.

THEY were married in June, which was Betty Lou's idea, though the town said it was so that Avery could take advantage of the summer excursion rates to Niagara Falls. When they got back to town, Betty's folks wanted them to live in the big house, but Avery was just as independent as he was close. He rented one side of a two-family house away down at the further end of Orchard street.

A few days later he walked into my office and pulled up a chair close to my desk.

"You and I are Scotchmen," he began in an abrupt, businesslike tone, "and we know how to keep our mouths shut." I looked at him in surprise. He seemed still hardly more than a kid to me, yet here he was talking like a shrewd old man. "Am I right?" he demanded.

"You are," I answered, wondering what would come next.

"Good," said he, reaching into his coat pocket. "Then I want to open an account in this bank."

"I'm glad of that," I replied. "How much will it be?"

"Six hundred dollars to start with; but don't worry, it will grow."

I looked at him in amazement.

"Do you mean to tell me that you've put yourself through law school, got married, and still have six hundred dollars?"

He treated the question as superfluous.

"I'll be admitted to the bar in September," he said. "Then you keep your eyes on this account. Once I'm over that hurdle nothing can stop me." He hitched his chair up a notch closer. "Now, this is what's on my mind," he continued, "you know all about my folks—what we've been through. That is, you think you know."

Potatoes—potatoes—potatoes—stew—stew—Never any decent clothes, never any fun." His eyes flashed. "Do you know what hell is?" he demanded. "It isn't fire. It's a place where winter lasts the year round and you sleep three in a bed with one blanket and your teeth chattering, and see people riding by in carriages, wrapped up in furs. That's hell, and I've served my time in it. There's not going to be any of that for Avery Douglas and wife. We're going to get a hundred thousand dollars and we're going to get it quick."

He leaned back and surveyed me through his keen blue eyes as though to make sure that I was properly impressed. I remarked that I hoped he would realize his ambition.

"Which means that you don't think I can," he cried, with a sweep of his hand. "That's natural. If a banker had faith he wouldn't be a banker;

I don't expect it. All I ask you to do is to watch that account grow for four or five years, and don't let the gossiping fools of this town find out anything about my affairs. They think I'll always be poor; let them keep on thinking it."

Half way across the room he turned around. "When I get admitted to the bar in September I'm going to open an office here and one in Boston," he said, "and I'd like to get some of the business of the bank. What are the chances?"

He couldn't have knocked the wind out of me more completely if he had poked my left buckle with the nozzle of a gun.

"I'll see," I gasped, and that seemed to satisfy him. He jammed his hat over his ears and as he swung open the door I halted him for an instant.

"I suppose you and Betty will be starting to build a home of your own?" I asked.

He turned with a look of contempt. "Fools build houses for wise men to live in," he answered. "We're paying \$12 a month for half of a two-family tenement, and we'll continue paying at the same rate until that hundred thousand is put away where nothing can happen to it."

With that he hustled out into the street, leaving me to think of half a dozen sharp remarks with which I should have punctured his balloon. Yet, with all, I couldn't get over a sneaking feeling of respect for the lad. At least, he knew where he wanted to get and had pointed his freckled nose in that direction.

In half an hour handsome Tom Breckenridge stopped in to cash a check and to tell me that his mother was sending him to Europe for six months as a graduation present. I wondered where they would be in ten years—Tom with his money and his handsome face; Avery with his hard young jaw and his hard-cash goal.

The first round, at least, was Avery's; he had the girl.

Later I made two entries on the books:

Avery Douglas, deposited..... \$600

Mary Lee Breckenridge, withdrawn..... \$1,000

With that I looked the safe, lit a cigar and went home.

IN September I gave Avery some odd jobs of searching titles, drawing up deeds and the like. I had a nice, generous feeling about it at first, thinking I was helping a young man to a good start. But after a couple of months I quit kidding myself. The lad didn't ask for any more generosity than he expected to give. He knew his trade and he worked. Three days a week Avery was in Boston, where he had a dinky little office on Milk street, and the other three days he was riding around our town, buzzing every one that might need anything in the law line, from an affidavit to a quiet divorce. At the end of the first year the \$600 had grown to \$2,200.

However, there was nothing about the Avery or Betty to advertise the fact. Betty always looked neat enough; but when you live in a town where every woman knows the inside history of every single dress you can't expect to remodel a trowsau indefinitely without creating a certain amount of comment. But Avery had by far the best

gave away nearly five dollars' worth of five-cent cigars.

The youngster was the pride of his life. He used to tote him around town, with one little foot stuck in his coat pocket, and the chubby hand hanging onto the collar of his coat. Some days he took him to the office. "Selling the hire of an office boy," said the town; but Avery just loved to have the boy around, giving him the backs of old envelopes to mark on and letting him poke away at the typewriter keys.

One afternoon when the bank was closed I was smoking a cigar, with my feet up on the desk and reading my favorite author, Henry Thoreau, when Avery came in.

"What's the book?" said he, pulling up a chair.

"Thoreau," I answered. "You ought to read him. He had you beat at your own game; he lived one whole year on twenty-seven dollars and a few cents."

"Sure as you're sitting there," I answered. "He gives his year's expenses all itemized in one of his books. But he had a little different idea from yours," I continued. "Here I'll read you what he says:

"The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run. To have done anything by which you earned merely money is to have been idle and worse."

"Read that again," Avery demanded, and I repeated the sentences.

"Darn nonsense!" he exclaimed.

"I'm not so sure about that," I answered. "You see what he means is this: That money is really life, in a crystallized form. If you earn a dollar it means that you have exchanged a part of your life for it, a part of your muscle or mind, your happiness, your satisfaction, your leisure, or what not. Now Thoreau's notion was that it's possible to swap too much life for a dollar, or a number of dollars."

"Where would you bankers get off with everybody following that fool idea?" Avery demanded. "You'd have to go to work; that's where you'd be."

"Maybe so," I answered, seeing that we would get nowhere along those lines. "What else is on your mind this fair afternoon?"

"Just this," said he, edging up with his chair. "Do you remember that day when I came in here and told you I was out to get a hundred thousand dollars?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, do you know how far along I am?"

"Offhand, I'd guess about forty thousand."

"Better than that," he said, smiling in great satisfaction. "Forty-seven thousand six hundred; and all in good bonds or cash. Pretty near half way, and by this time next year I'll be all the way."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I've got a chance to double that forty-seven thousand," he exclaimed. "I've got the best sure-thing tip that ever came down from the top. You know I've done work for some pretty big men in State street. Well, I'm betting the whole forty-seven thousand on what they've just told me, and I'm going to win the bet."

I tried to argue with him, telling some stories of what the market had

much would it cost? But I know from Doc's own lips that the story is a lie. All rules of economy were off where the boy was concerned. Avery hung around the station for hours waiting for the great doctor, hurried him up to the house and sat all night by Jack's bed, keeping a tight hold on his hand.

"Jackie," he kept calling over and over again. "Little fellow, you can't go away. You can't leave your daddy, Jackie."

The little heart fluttered, uncertain whether to stay or go; and all the night Avery leaned over and gripped the hand, as if holding the little life back from the edge by main force. About 1 o'clock in the morning he seemed to go off his head and Doc Madison and a neighbor dragged him out of the room and put him to bed. He was delirious for days.

While he lay there raving and fighting what looked like a hopeless battle, "Doc" said Avery, showing interest.

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degree. Betty was very quiet and restrained. She said that she was just celebrating a little over having her husband and son safe back again; and all the ladies said, "Bless you, my dear," and took a closer look at the material, and wondered whether the fever had permanently affected Avery's head.

The wonder grew when the Enterprise of two weeks later contained this note:

"Friends of Mr. and Mrs. Avery Douglas are congratulating them on the acquisition of a new home. They have purchased the Meadows residence on Orchard street near Central. Melcher & Croon were the agents in the transaction, and papers were passed last Monday. After extensive alterations Mr. and Mrs. Douglas will occupy the house as their permanent home."

Hardly had we recovered from this shock before it was rumored that the Douglas were giving a grand housewarming party. Sure enough, the new house was thrown open to pretty near the whole town, in relays, while a Boston orchestra played tunes on the piazza and the Boston caterer served more than \$700 worth of food.

Well, to shorten the story, Avery Douglas, who had been one of the closest humans that ever lived, became all of a sudden one of the most generous. I don't mean that he let sentiment interfere with his business. Not a bit of it. When he carried a big case for the woolen people to the supreme court and won it, they sent him a check for \$5,000, and he sent it back with a bill for \$10,000. The railroad had him on an annual retainer, and cried murder every year when he boosted the fee; but they stood for it, because they couldn't do without him. He charged a good price for his services, but it seemed as though he had a new idea about money, namely, that it was something to be used.

I kept a tight rein on myself just as long as I could; but finally I burst out with it.

"Avery, what in the dickens happened to you when you were sick?" I demanded. "You ain't any more like you used to be than a rabbit. I'm your financial adviser, and I resent not being let in on the secret."

"I've seen the curiosity gnawing at your vitals," he answered, "and I wondered how long you could control yourself. Well, I'm going to tell you the story, but you're the only one in town that will ever know."

LIVE stopped for a minute, and his face took on a look that I had never seen before. All the lines in it softened, and his eyes seemed to be looking at something a long way off.

Said he: "I was so sick that night before Christmas that they thought for a few minutes I was dead. Well—I wouldn't confess it to any one except you, but I'm telling you a true story—I was dead—dead and a long ways away. I was lying there on the bed, throbbing with the fever, and all of a sudden my life seemed to be unrolling out in front of me like a moving picture film. I was back there in the meadow on Orchard street, playing barefooted in the brook; then I was at school; then I was with Betty the night I persuaded

me a haughty look, and spoke to another. 'Pay no attention to him,' he said, 'it's only that piker Douglas. He gave up everything in the world to get a hundred thousand dollars. Don't give him a word.'

"They turned their backs on me, and I went on, following Jackie through all sorts of houses and long, beautiful streets. Everywhere people stopped and spoke to him and patted him on the head, but nobody paid any attention to me. Finally, we reached a sort of palace and Jackie went in, and I crowded past the door with him before they could shut me out. We climbed up a big stairway and into a great high-ceilinged room, and there, standing at one end, I saw him. You know who I mean. He looked just like that picture that used to hang in the Sunday school room when we were kids, only he wasn't sad like the picture. He saw Jackie and reached out a hand. 'Well, well, my little man, and how are you?' He cried. I pushed up close behind Jackie, and when no one noticed me I cleared my throat and said, 'Ahem, that's my little boy.' At that they all turned, and he gave me one glance that seemed to bore right into my heart. 'So,' said he, in a voice that was kind, but cut all the deeper just because of that. 'Did you never read my words?' He asked. It was for you that I said, 'What shall I profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' And with that he turned away."

EVERY paused again. The clock on my desk struck 5. Outside a street lamp was lighted; a group of children passed the bank window, and their laughter rang clear in the chill March air. He stirred at the sound as though suddenly conscious that he had not finished the story.

"Nobody wanted me—do you understand? They thought I had made a mess of things. I started down the great room toward the door, and then I turned around and ran back and grabbed little Jackie tight in my

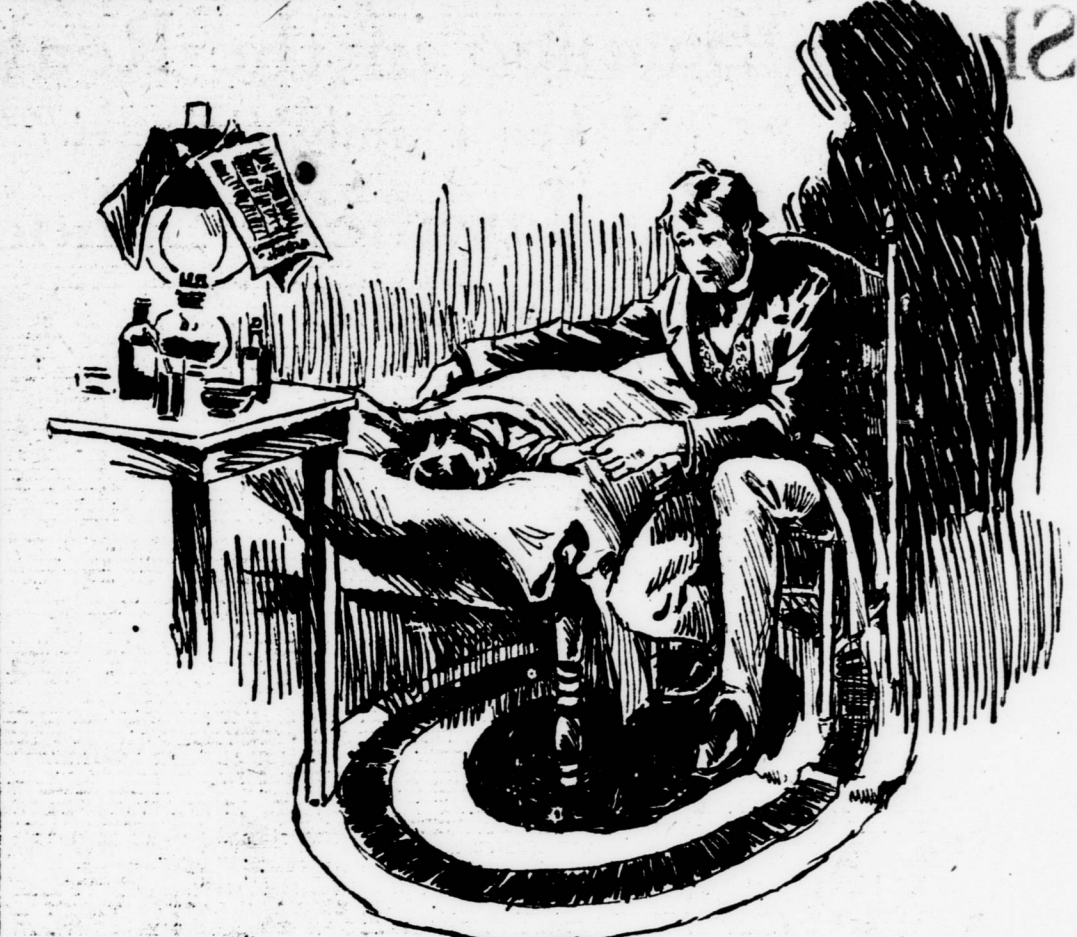
arms. They made a move, as though to take him, and changed their minds and smiled at him, and then, with a different sort of smile, at me. So I ran down the street and through the gate and out into the big black spaces, lighted by the stars. And after a while I heard bells, the bells of our own town. And suddenly I was back in my room, in bed, and Jackie was there beside me, and Betty. I reached out and touched them, and Betty spoke. 'It's Christmas, Avery,' she said. 'But I couldn't say anything. I just clutched at them and pulled them down toward me, and cried.'

He was silent for a long time.

"What do you think," he demanded: "do you think I was really dead?"

"I don't know that; but I can tell you something else," I answered. "The whole town is glad you're alive."

That was no exaggeration, as was proved, when he ran for Congress three years later. His opponent was none other than our old friend Handsome Tom, with the winning smile and all the money that the party could possibly spend. But there were so many folks who had reason to be grateful to Avery Douglas for little things and big things and all sorts of things that he won the election hands down. Every two years we re-elected him, being a steady people and disliking to change, and when, one winter, he died in Washington, we gave him the finest funeral that



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any man has ever had in our little town.

All this happened years ago. Betty is nearly seventy now; but she still lives in the old home in Orchard street. Her income is enough to keep her comfortably, and she's had a world of satisfaction in Jackie, who is in Boston, and every bit as good a lawyer as his dad. "It's funny about money," she said to me one day. "There seems to be two ways to get it. One is to think about it all the time, and keep all you can lay your

hands on; and the other is to sort of forget it except when you give it away. And the funny part is that the more you give the more you somehow seem to get."

Being a banker, I am not in a position to pass an impartial judgment on that philosophy. All I know is this: that when Avery died, it was his excess and not all his debts and settled up his estate.

The estate totaled just an even hundred thousand dollars.

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THE NEW IRELAND

By ELSIE CASSATT LAUGHLIN

AMONG the prominent women in Washington official life who proudly wear the shamrock tomorrow is Mrs. Elizabeth McEvoy Ashurst, wife of the democratic senator from Arizona, who is a most ardent Irish devotee.

A native of the historic Marble City, Killarney, and reared in the shade of Ormond Castle, its most noted landmark for centuries, Mrs. Ashurst has never lost her keen love for her native land and its traditions.

Though in her teens when she came to make her home in America, she has watched the Emerald Isle writhe in the throes of her national and internal convulsions. Like every true Irish patriot, she has kept her love and faith in her people pinned fast to the dream that is part and parcel of every Irish heart. To her, as to hundreds of other sons and daughters of Ireland, is ever a magnet to which eyes and footsteps turn; and having just returned from a visit to her birthplace and a tour of her land, Mrs. Ashurst feels that Ireland has at last emerged from her chrysalis of enforced suppression and is again rearing her head as a nation.

"It is a new Ireland that I saw this time," said Mrs. Ashurst, with a thrill of pride, speaking of her trip of three months ending last September. "No, Ireland was never divided or torn by religious questions. Her troubles through the ages have always been political. English rule and English propaganda caused Ireland to be disrupted but never conquered. No true Irishman ever admits that Ireland could be conquered; Erin wants to be a republic, and she has been fighting for 750 years to achieve that goal."

"What is the attitude of the people now?" Mrs. Ashurst was asked.

"The people are contented for the time being with the Free State government, but are not satisfied. Only a small part of the island is now under British rule, just six counties in the north; the remaining twenty-six belong to the Free State."

"Of course you know that the house of parliament is called the dail eirann and is conducted along the same lines as our Senate. President William Cosgrove of the Free State presides and the secretary of state is Desmond Fitzgerald. All the officers and members conduct themselves with great dignity."

"The membership of the parliament is made up of representatives of the labor party and the Free State party. The meeting-room is in the form of an amphitheater with seats arranged in rows or tiers and so planned that each member has a clear view of the proceedings. The parliament hopes at some future time to move from its present quarters to the old Grattan parliament house, the government of the Irish Free State has all the powers of the Dominion of Canada in relation to the British Empire."

"The Irish love to fight," smiled Mrs. Ashurst. "All of the centuries of internal strife have not taken the fight out of them. At present there are between 15,000 and 20,000 republicans in Mount Joy and other prisons in Dublin, who are confined because of their zeal for complete independence from Great Britain, and who may be released at any time on promising not to take up arms against the Free State."

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"Splendid roads are general and good train service found throughout the country. Light railroad cars are in use, but the trains speed at sixty miles an hour. The best food that could possibly be secured, even better than in France, was obtained in all of the great hotels. The bread, in particular being worth mentioning. Huge loaves were placed on the tables, sufficient to serve ten persons, and tasted like nuts when eaten. Drinks, too, were served to those who wished, for Ireland still has its vines and liquors. Temperance is the keynote rather than prohibition."

"The country is in a most prosperous financial condition. More than two hundred fifty million dollars, or nearly fifty million pounds, are on deposit in the Bank of Ireland in Dublin. This does not include deposits in branch banks. So Ireland is in reality making rapid progress."

"Yes, it is the soft, warm climate due to the gulf stream that we like to say adds to the attractiveness of Irish women. There is a large proportion of beautiful faces among them; even those who are in these and in reality making rapid progress."

"The Irish purpose in living is not accomplishment but happiness. They would like to obey literally the command: 'Take no thought for the morrow.' The Irishman does not save money, like the Scot, because he likes to save; but rather because he wants to give his daughters a dowry or send a son to college."

"The whole aim of Ireland," said Mrs. Ashurst, in conclusion, "is to be a nation once again. It longs to justify its history. It is one of the oldest nations of the world, having had a civilization 5,000 years B. C., although but little is known of the inhabitants before the fourth century A. D. There are many traditions of famous men in these and of the youth which all Irish men and women wish to remember and relate. Of the most important was Niall, who was high king for years."

"But every one must know the story of Saint Patrick. Not Niall made many raids into Britain, among the captives taken on one of these was a youth about sixteen years old, a native of Dumbarton, who became the slave of a chieftain named Melchus. For seven or eight years he herded his master's flocks on the mountains of Antrim. He was not content, however, with his lot in life, and escaped and went back to Britain, where he was ordained a priest. From Britain he went to Gaul, some say to Italy, but he longed for the island he had learned to love and determined to return and teach his pagan inhabitants to believe in the Christian faith."

"He landed on the shores of Strangford Lough in the year 432. Thus the great Saint Patrick came a second time to Ireland, this time not as a slave, but to bring it the blessings of Christianity."

Many stories are told of the simplicity and clearness of the teachings of the Saint. On one occasion when it seemed impossible for his hearers to grasp the meaning of the Holy Trinity he stooped and plucked a leaf of Shamrock and pointing to the three perfect leaves growing on one stem explained that it represented the Three-in-One—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From that time the shamrock has been the symbol and emblem of Ireland and the 17th of March, the day on which Saint Patrick died, a day of national observance."

Mrs. Ashurst expects to see Ireland progress toward her goal with rapid strides and when she is recognized as the first minister from the United States to the Irish Free State she will have achieved not only a personal ambition, but will have the added joy of seeing her native land again taking its place among the nations."



WHO SHOULD GO FLOATING IN BUT BETTY DOUGLAS, RIGGED OUT IN NEW TOGS FROM HAT TO HEEL.

practice in the county, and his balance at the bank stopped every year.

They still kept to the same little house, which was so bare that the chairs looked lonesome and apologetic, hiding in the corners. They had children, but when he was thirty-five and about one-third of the way toward his hundred thousand, the miracle happened. Betty presented him with the handsomest little curly-haired Scotchman that you'd want to lay eyes on.

Avery walked the streets that day like a man in a dream, and some people thought his mind was unsettled, as he

account. Previous to his sickness he drew only about three checks a month, one to Betty for the house-keeping expenses, one for life insurance, and one for cash to cover his car fare and lunches. But now I began to notice a steady stream of little checks coming through; \$5 to that person, \$5 to that one, \$10 to another one, and occasionally even \$25. Some of the names of the recipients I didn't know, but most of them were home-folks who had some special reason for needing a little lift. I kept my own counsel and said nothing; but pretty soon I began hearing strange stories from outside.

My wife brought in one of them. She was at a meeting of the Ladies' Aid, when she should come floating in but Betty Douglas, rigged out in new togs from hat to heel. Dad Swirles was reading Scripture when she arrived, but not a single pair of eyes missed her, and the meeting was hurried through in record time, so that the members could gather around and start the third

her to give up Tom Breckenridge and come with me. That part of the picture stayed on the screen a long time. I saw her life as it would have been if she had gone with Tom—the travel and the new clothes and the years of easy days and happy evenings; then I saw her down there in our cramped little house, wiping the dishes and turning down the lamps to save kerosene. All the big law cases I had won paraded before me, and all the folks that had wanted me to do things for them which I had refused to do. Finally I felt myself slipping, slipping, slipping, until I had slipped entirely out of my body and was standing there at the foot of the bed, looking down at myself. I felt something press my hand, and I looked around and there was Jackie. He motioned to me, and we seemed to walk out of the window and into among the stars—those little baby feet, wandering all alone, out there among the stars. And me stumbling after them, tripping and falling. Finally we went into a place that seemed full of interesting people. I began to feel a little better. "I will like this place," said to myself. "It is full